# Queen Elizabeth’s uneasy encounter with Ceaușescu reveals strain of royal diplomacy



During her 70-year reign, the late Queen Elizabeth II hosted numerous state visits, welcoming a wide range of world leaders to Buckingham Palace. Among the 113 state visits she conducted as Head of State, some guests were noted for their difficult and controversial nature. Historian Kate Williams and royal biographer Robert Hardman discussed these in a recent two-part edition of the podcast "Queens, Kings, and Dastardly Things," focusing particularly on the most challenging of the Queen's houseguests.

One such visit was that of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu, the Communist dictators of Romania who ruled with a harsh and oppressive regime from 1965 until their violent overthrow in 1989. Their reign was marked by widespread human rights abuses, and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, they were deposed and executed by their own people. Despite warnings from French diplomats, then-Prime Minister Harold Wilson requested the Queen to host an official state visit for the Ceaușescus in June 1978, during the height of the Cold War.

Robert Hardman explained on the podcast that Britain viewed Ceaușescu as an "independent spirit," someone ready to take a different stance from the Soviet bloc, and hoped to establish commercial ties with his regime. "Britain is an economic basket case," Hardman noted, highlighting the country's financial struggles at the time, including severe inflation and a reluctance from others to lend money. Ceaușescu insisted on receiving a full state visit and the associated honours, including a stay with the Queen at Buckingham Palace, as a condition for any potential deal.

The visit was reportedly deeply uncomfortable for the Queen. According to Hardman, she described Mrs Ceaușescu in a letter to the British embassy in Bucharest as a "viper." French officials had previously hosted the Romanian couple, and rumour had it they left the diplomatic quarters in a state of disarray. Hardman recounted that the Queen instructed the master of the Royal Household to remove anything valuable from the Belgian Suite, where the Ceaușescus were to stay, due to fears of damage or theft.

The Ceaușescus, suspicious and paranoid, believed palace staff were spying on them, even allegedly thinking their clothes were being washed with poison. They avoided private conversations inside the palace, choosing instead to speak in the gardens, mistakenly thinking this would ensure privacy. The Queen, on her routine walks with her corgis in the palace gardens, once hid behind a bush to avoid encountering the couple, marking the first time in her life she purposely evaded guests in this manner. Hardman characterised them as "so objectionable, so charmless" that she "had absolutely nothing to say to them."

The podcast episode explores further tales of troublesome royal houseguests over the decades. The latest state visit hosted by the Queen was that of US President Donald Trump and his wife Melania, symbolising the wide spectrum of personalities that passed through Buckingham Palace during her reign.

The “Daily Mail” is reporting on this podcast series, which delves into some of the most notorious and challenging encounters within the British monarchy, illustrating the complexity and pressures involved in royal hospitality across different eras and political climates.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.express.co.uk/news/royal/1135767/queen-elizabeth-ii-state-visit-royal-news-nicolae-ceausescu-spt> - This article discusses the discomfort Queen Elizabeth II experienced during the 1978 state visit of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu, highlighting her attempt to avoid them by hiding behind a bush in the palace gardens.
* <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/royal-family/queen-elizabeth-ii-buckingham-place-hid-bush-nicolae-ceausescu-romania-a9529691.html> - This piece provides details about Queen Elizabeth II's reaction to the Ceaușescus' visit, including her decision to hide in a bush to avoid them during a walk in the palace gardens.
* <https://www.express.co.uk/news/royal/981977/the-queen-news-nicolae-ceausescu-state-visit-queen-elizabeth-royal-news> - This article recounts the 1978 state visit of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu, emphasizing the Queen's discomfort and her attempt to evade them by hiding in a bush in the palace gardens.
* <https://www.euronews.ro/articole/nicolae-ceausescu-primit-de-regina-elisabeta-a-ii-a-in-1978-oaspetii-romani-au-fo> - This report details the official state visit of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu to the UK in 1978, including their reception by Queen Elizabeth II and their stay at Buckingham Palace.
* <https://www.gettyimages.com/photos/queen-elizabeth-ii-1978> - This collection includes photographs from the 1978 state visit of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu, showcasing their arrival at Victoria Station and their time at Buckingham Palace.
* <https://www.time.com/5329498/trump-uk-visit-controversy-history/> - This article discusses various controversial state visits to the UK, including that of Nicolae Ceaușescu in 1978, highlighting the discomfort and regret following his regime's downfall.
* <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14664723/Queen-elizabeth-II-worst-state-visitor-nicolae-ceausescu-romania-royal-family-podcast.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data